

Oh, I tracked this process like a hawk. I talked to every member of that screening committee. How did Father O'Brien do? And you know what I heard repeatedly, time after time? Home run. A triple. Best of the lot. And, in the final analysis, he was the top pick of the committee.

Now, was that related to the leaders who made the choice of someone other than him? Yes. The gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) admitted that even though the formal paper did not have the ranking, he verbalized it, and so did the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY). So to say that we did not know who was the top candidate is not accurate.

One of the Republican leaders said, My gosh, I did not know the denominations of the candidates. That is not accurate. I personally talked to that leader on at least two occasions on the floor. I am just so hesitant to go and try to correct all the misstatements, because I think that opens up the issue again.

I want closure, like you. But here we have this Catholic priest, who just thought he would like to be the Chaplain. He thought he could do well for all of us in the House. And, since that time, he has been greatly maligned.

In Roll Call last week we read, Well, he does not have enough counseling experience. Well, he can weather that, because we all know as a colonel in the Army Reserves he counsels enlisted and officers every day he is on duty. As a faculty member, he counsels students and other faculty. He has counseled me and continues to do so. So it is not the idea of counseling.

But to go after this Catholic priest, who did nothing but want to be the Chaplain. There were rumors leaked, and I cannot point fingers because I do not know where they came from, that his home in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, was purchased with some Federal funds. Naturally, the reporters descend on the poor guy like locusts. Is that true? Is it true? Is that true? Actually, it was not true.

He absconded with some money from a drug and alcohol program, one which he has never run, and the reporters again called him and descended. Is it true?

It is not, because I never was involved in such a program. I never got any funding. So I know full well that throughout the process this individual and his reputation have suffered also.

So, today, Mr. Speaker, we close the book on this sad chapter. But I ask my Republican colleagues not to rewrite history, because that we should not do. But I think there are some in this body that owe Father Tim O'Brien an apology. As we go on from today, I think I can be confident that not only Father Tim O'Brien has been vindicated, but a lot of us, with the appointment of our new Chaplain.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

COMMENTS ON SELECTION OF HOUSE CHAPLAIN

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I, too, was not prepared to speak today, by I think the record does need some correction.

We met, as my cochair, the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY), said, we had endless meetings. We narrowed the 38 to 17. We narrowed those to six. Then we decided, we at the next meeting, we would reduce the six to three. We interviewed the 17, and then we re-interviewed the six.

We decided that we would send them, and "we" as a group, without instructions from the leadership on either side of the aisle, that we would send the names to the leadership unranked, and, as the Speaker said, in alphabetic order. And that is exactly what we did.

Now, the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) and I met with the Speaker, the majority leader and the minority leader in the Speaker's rooms, and we presented the three names. The gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) and I both said we personally thought that Father O'Brien was the best. But that was our personal opinion, that was not the statement from the committee. The committee clearly intended that the decision be made by the three leaders, without any bias for what we had done. Our job was to go out and advertise, bring in applicants, interview them, narrow the field to three, and send the names up to be picked by the leadership.

This Speaker should be commended for opening the process. Three of the last four Democrat Speakers were Catholic. They never considered a priest. Over 50 years of the last 60-some in the history of this House, the Democrat party has been in charge. They never considered a priest.

So I think that we have said enough. The record was we did not rank these people, and the decision was to be made by the leadership without bias.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET—FISCAL YEAR 2001

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. UPTON). Pursuant to House Resolution 446 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 290.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the

further consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 290) with Mr. LAHOOD (Chairman pro tempore) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. When the Committee of the Whole House rose earlier today, 40 minutes of debate remained on the subject of economic goals and policies.

The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) has 17½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) has 22½ minutes remaining.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, before we were delayed for the proceedings that just concluded, I was involved with the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) in carrying out the statutory rights that we have as members of the Joint Economic Committee to discuss the budget in the context of our economy and the various aspects of the economy that may have something to do with policies of our government.

I would like to turn to another subject. I discussed Fed policy at some length earlier, and I would like to spend a few minutes discussing one other set of issues that had to do with the potential effect of high oil prices on the economy as we move forward.

As I said before, overall economic conditions are strong. Rising oil prices and gasoline prices are one of several economic issues, however, that concerns millions of Americans.

This week Energy Secretary Richardson began a trip to OPEC nations to try to convince them to lower sky-high oil and gas prices. I believe the administration should release some oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, like several other Members do, but there is another source of pressure also available to help American consumers.

A review of the situation reveals that U.S. taxpayer dollars are being provided to nations involved with the OPEC conspiracy to raise oil and gas prices. Consumers across America are outraged when they pull up to the pump and view each day or each week the rapid price increase in home heating fuel and gasoline prices over the last few months. In the section of the country where I live, that is the Northeast, I am from New Jersey, of course, we are especially hard hit because of our dependence on home heating oil.

OPEC's supply restrictions are a primary reason for these price hikes, I think all Americans know that today, and many Americans are justifiably angry at the oil producing nations and their allies. These citizens would be even more angry if they knew their hard-earned tax dollars were being funneled to key oil producing nations by the United States Government. That is